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THE WHOLE TRUTH
—John Cogley

THE

# Commonweal

## The Kennan-Acheson Debate

The Long Silence Is Broken

**by Kenneth W. Thompson**

## Cozzens Dispossessed

Critical Rise and Fall

**by James Finn**

## Labor's Glass House

Unions As Management

**by John C. Cort**

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# Beginning Volume 68

With this first April issue The Commonweal begins the second half of its 34th year of continuous publication. The volume completed last week covered a wide range of subjects extending alphabetically from various activities and omissions of the Administration to Writers and Politics in Britain and the United States. Commonweal authors during this period have included: J. N. Moody, Douglas Hyde, H. A. Reinhold, Christopher Dawson, Phyllis McGinley, Francis E. McMahon, Karl Stern, Bede Griffiths, Walker Percy, Dorothy Day, Thomas Molnar and many others.

Subject matter of a wide scope and variety together with authorship of sustained quality will also typify the issues of The Commonweal which are to appear in this new volume. Each week readers will look forward to discerning comment on leading books, the drama criticism of Richard Hayes, and the movie reviews of Philip T. Hartung — not to mention John Cogley's column and other features. That is why a trial subscription, entered now, is such a bargain — over 300 pages of good reading on ideas and issues of the day for only $2.

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THE
# Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

## week by week

### PREOCCUPIED AT HOME

THIS COUNTRY'S strong proclivity for concentrating on domestic matters and immediate concerns is reinforced these days by the deepening of the recession. Distress conditions in many industries and regions, together with a still mounting toll of nationwide unemployment, tend to thrust even farther into the background America's precarious position in a divided world. But when the going is rough, it hardly helps matters to ignore any important aspect of one's predicament, no matter how unwelcome it may be.

In the half year since the launching of the first Sputnik, the comparative military strength of the West has undoubtedly declined, but at least certain steps, however inadequate, have been taken to turn the tide. By recognizing certain weaknesses, which were there all along, we have made the first moves towards remedying them. Something of the same sort is required in other sectors of our defenses and at a most unpromising time. (A feather in the wind is the report that Senator Knowland has decided not to run for President in 1960 because his party's prospects look so dim.) And if the Administration can be charged with indecision in meeting domestic woes, that accusation can be made with even greater vehemence in regard to questions of foreign policy.

In the seemingly endless Moscow-Washington parleying about a summit meeting, one of the leading bones of contention has been our rightful insistence on preliminary exploration at a lower diplomatic level. The United States and the Soviet Union remain greatly at odds over this point. Certain Washington observers contend that, even before this, two still more preliminary decisions have to be made. The first of these is wholly within the Administration in Washington, where counsels on American policy toward Mr. Khrushchev remain sharply divided. Once it is settled where we want to go and how we intend to get there, our policy-makers will need to seek agreement with Britain and France as to common allied objectives. Then, presuming there are certain questions which the Soviets actually do wish to iron out, our delegates could approach such a conference with some firm positive objectives.

MEANWHILE, it might serve as a useful start to confront some of the reasons why a consistently conciliatory tone (but not willingness to retreat) is indicated on our part. The NATO alliance has lost much of its cohesiveness since the desperate Suez adventure; France itself is greatly weakened in nearly every way by the war in Algeria and the consequent weakness and instability in the French capital. Withdrawals of allied troops from Germany and the lower troop goals for the West German contingents mean that the conventional NATO forces are considerably below their original objectives. There is a danger here that reliance on tactical atomic weapons to compensate for lesser manpower may offer a prospect leading almost inevitably into the all-out nuclear war that would mean ruination for all contending parties. This very possibility increases the chances for appeasement on our part. Moreover, Mr. Dulles has just returned to Washington from the Far East with pronounced forebodings over recent Soviet progress throughout that entire area.

Disengagement, which is the crux of the Acheson-Kennan debates discussed in this issue of The Commonweal by Kenneth W. Thompson, has a strong appeal among the allied and neutralist nations. If it could be looked upon to lead to other uprisings among the satellites, it would also unquestionably mean the scrapping of the whole



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NATO effort—which with all its deficiencies remains Western Europe's only defense.

Any responsible posture of defense has to be based on a certain amount of Soviet unpredictability and therefore on defense forces that comprise a substantial deterrent to any possible Russian westward march. At the same time it must be recognized that the present Kremlin leaders seem to be pinning their main hopes on their proficiency at political subversion, an activity which leaves their homeland unharmed. It is here that they have made the greatest headway in recent months. The NATO alliance itself is weaker and, on balance, Russian propaganda for the summit meeting has enhanced the widespread respect which has been gained by spectacular scientific achievements. Trouble spots in the world have multiplied; tensions have increased in the inflammable Middle East; Indonesia is being torn from within; the resentful underdeveloped countries are undergoing a new travail because the American recession has badly curtailed the vital demand for their exportable raw materials.

In the urgent tussle with the recession the American people cannot afford to become short-sightedly self-absorbed. Shoring up the national economy is a primary task, but it is also essential now for us to develop and expand those trade, aid, political and defense policies on the major scale required to attain security and freedom for the peoples of this nation and the free world.

## TROUBLE AT NASHVILLE

LIKE MANY Southern communities, Nashville, Tennessee, had its difficulties in adjusting to the Supreme Court decision which banned segregated public schools. Some of the citizens of Nashville campaigned strongly against integration, which was approached slowly and apparently reluctantly by the school board, but disagreements were kept in their civic and legal channels, and there was no violence. Progress was being made.

Then, last summer, racist John Kasper came to Nashville, and segregationist activity waxed stronger and wilder. In September a bomb demolished five classrooms of an East Nashville elementary school. The dynamiting was almost universally condemned in the city, and Kasper, although not implicated in the investigation of the crime, was ordered from town on other charges.

Since then, relative quiet—until now the Jewish Community Center has been bombed, Jews singled out for anonymous threats and abuse, and "white supremacy" extended to include anti-Semitism.

The dynamiters were not found last fall, but the absence of any further acts of violence enabled one to hope that the hysteria was only a passing seizure, that Nashville would proceed to solve its problems in peace and calmness. But now the second outrage has shattered that hope. It seems now that if Nashville is to know peace, the person or persons responsible for these desperate crimes must be found. It is charged by some, in this connection, that the violence in Nashville is related to similar outbreaks in other parts of the South and is part of a deliberate terrorist campaign.

If there is anything of comfort in these terrible events, it is that the citizens of Nashville have been shown the issue—of lawful process versus anarchy and crime—in all its naked ugliness. And they have expressed, properly and inevitably, their horror at the sight.

Exposed for what it always is, at bottom, racism in Nashville is in the long run doomed. But in the short run, in terms of human life, safety and public decency today, every effort must be made to protect the people from its death throes. What is needed in Nashville, then, is strength, not resignation.

## STRAW IN AN ILL WIND

THE TENOR and significance of recent Supreme Court decisions have several times been discussed in these pages, and it is not our intention to reopen the debate now. But some comment—non-political, although perhaps not non-ideological—seems to be necessary on the latest action by the Court, its ruling in favor of Loew's, Inc., playwright Patrick Hamilton and the sanctity of copyright, and against C.B.S., comedian Jack Benny and the right of parody.

Back in 1952, on one of his television shows, which he filmed, Mr. Benny parodied the movie "Gaslight" in a comic sketch he called "Autolight." Loew's, Inc., and Mr. Hamilton brought suit for an infringement of copyright on the grounds that Mr. Benny had borrowed "substantially" from "Gaslight" and had not asked permission to parody. Lower courts ruled in favor of Loew's and the author, and Mr. Benny's film of "Autolight" was impounded. Appealed up to the Supreme Court, the case has now been considered, and the equally divided decision (four to four, with Justice Douglas



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abstaining) affirms the findings of the lower courts.

Without going into any weighty speculations on trends and shifts in Supreme Court attitudes, we wish nevertheless to register some dismay. This latest decision must be counted a blow to the world of arts and letters, and so to our society at large. Satirical parody is one of the most civilized and elegant forms of humor—and more than humor, criticism. Can anyone imagine Aristophanes getting "permission" to parody the Athenian V.I.P.'s? Or columnist Art Buchwald being "authorized" to lampoon Jim Hagerty? Or any of the practitioners of this useful art being blessed by their exalted targets? Mr. Benny in his modesty makes no pretense of being more than a journeyman laughmaker, but we see him here as the spokesman—defeated, alas—for a noble tradition, and one our society surely needs.

## THE TEXAS QUARTERLY

FOR MANY years now the literary quarterlies in this country have been subjected to severe criticism for being unimaginative, unoriginal, inbred and dull. This criticism is too widespread and comes from too many different sources to be readily dismissed. But even those who make these charges would not wish to see the quarterlies quietly disappear, for they are still the potential outlets for new writers and they still provide a platform for discussion and debate among established writers. In so far as, taken collectively, they fail to be as exciting as the quarterlies of the twenties and thirties, they reflect the literary and cultural interregnum which is ours today.

Given this situation and the little general interest shown in quarterlies, it is a mark at once of courage and optimism when another quarterly appears. Yet this is exactly what happened recently and in a manner not to be denied recognition. In February, the University of Texas brought forth the first issue of the *Texas Quarterly*. The range of articles in this issue is wide and the list of promised contributions is a sign that it will continue to be so.

Among the articles are a psychologists's view of the "Natural and Supernatural," a physicist's account of the "Structure of the Nucleus," an executive's presentation of problems of "Labor and Management," memoirs of Stark Young, poems of Conrad Aiken and Juan Ramón Jiménez and Herbert Read's account of "Poetry in My Time." There is, further, an almost sixty-page supplement concerned with the centennial celebration of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*. In addition to the studies of several particular aspects of Baudelaire's work, there is a Foreword by Henri Peyre and supplementary illustrations.

A volume so full and so varied could not be free from all criticism. The first article, for instance, on the "Natural and Supernatural," is a pleasant, naive variant of a position considered intellectually sophisticated in the nineteenth century. The author says, for example, that "there are, in my opinion, no scientific or philosophic grounds for denying the possibility of an 'All-Knower . . .' " And further: "Belief in such a God, I repeat, cannot be based on any available scientific evidence. It is frankly an act of faith, a faith that satisfies natural cravings and gives comfort and moral fortitude to multitudes of people. It is unseemly for any man of science or any philosopher to condemn that faith, even though he himself may not entertain it." One can only nod in passing familiarity to such statements and move on to another essay.

The words of Henri Peyre indicate what we can rightly expect to find in a volume such as this: "The state of Texas suggests, in the minds of many of us, vitality and an impetuous 'coup de main' on the future; but its University well knows that criticism is the life-blood of creation, and that the scholar, the scientist, the creator must often plunge into the past . . . in order to thrust more valiantly into the future."

Much of this first volume of the *Texas Quarterly* represents such a plunge into the past, and if some writers return less heavily laden than others, the overall attempt is significant. Certainly the scope and ambition—not to mention the outsize proportions—of this first issue are equal to the legends and traditions of the state of Texas. And it is sufficient in its accomplishments to merit the attention and interest of all readers who wish well to the quarterlies.

## DE GUSTIBUS

TO DENOUNCE the chemise dress seems, if not a particularly brave thing to do, at least a pretty safe one. But it won't happen here—at least not yet. Turns out one of our editors *likes* them, and the matter has been put aside for further study. Meantime, the women of America will just have to decide for themselves.



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# The Kennan-Acheson Debate

*In his now famous B.B.C. lectures George F. Kennan struck a spark that set off major debates on foreign policy in most of the Western capitals*

by KENNETH W. THOMPSON

WE HAVE witnessed the beginning of a great debate on American foreign policy, signaled by the appearance of two remarkable little books by two extraordinarily able Americans. One is in the mainstream of classic works by diplomatists like Cambon, Jusserand and Nicolson; the other is essentially a lawyer's nearly irrefutable brief for the broad outline of policies for which he carried responsibility and which have partly been continued and partly neglected by his successors. In *Power and Diplomacy* (Harvard, $2.50), former Secretary of State Dean Acheson is at his vigorous best as economist, prosecutor and defense attorney. And in *Russia, the Atom and the West* (Harper, $2.50), George F. Kennan devotes himself stubbornly and uncompromisingly to the large realities and timeless concerns of diplomacy: the adjustment, accommodation or amelioration of conflicting national interests.

Thinking people throughout Western civilization have greeted both studies with keen interest and lively argument, if not universal acclaim. *Power and Diplomacy* is already a best-seller. And, in a recent poll, seventy-three per cent of a representative cross-section of the British public were familiar with the name of Mr. Kennan! Even for the British, traditionally more knowledgeable about their public figures, this is an astounding ratio.

Dean Acheson, the man who appointed Mr. Kennan Ambassador to Moscow and Director of the Policy Planning Staff, nevertheless felt constrained to denounce him as a nice scholarly man who had never grasped the realities of power. The present Secretary, Mr. Dulles, sent Mr. Acheson a personal note applauding his conclusions. But the London *Times* declared of Mr. Kennan that "a single man, by strength of mind and feeling, has by himself produced a political change, a current of movement under the ice." There is little doubt that Mr. Kennan, in his now famous B.B.C. Reith Lectures, struck a spark that set off major debates on foreign policy in most of the Western capitals, including our own.

How are we to account for the influence of the so-called Kennan thesis—all the more remarkable because he had several times before exposed the broad outlines of his thinking without provoking any such response? Sputnik and its timing must take some of the credit by dramatizing the consequences of the moratorium on new ideas that since 1950 has pervaded all levels of American culture. The lectures aroused attention partly because they had the field to themselves. They drew acclaim from Europeans as the first new idea from America's shores since the Marshall Plan.

Novel suggestions and original proposals had, of course, been advanced in the military field and even in economics by powerful and respected groups. But almost no American, particularly one with credentials of experience behind him, had ventured to raise questions regarding new avenues of diplomacy. A symptom of the barrenness of our collective attention to diplomacy has been the existence of nearly a dozen generously endowed research centers preoccupied with military problems and national security, while only a pitiful handful of our scholars have grappled with diplomatic problems.

Of course, the objective situation we have known since the close of World War II supports the preoccupation with military power. The lessons of two world wars had indelibly imprinted upon the best Western minds the futility of meeting force with good will. Foreign policy divorced from strength was bound to be impotent; aggressors recognized no language but military capability and firm intentions. The Low Coun-

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tries in World War I and the Baltic States in World War II succumbed not because they were bereft of virtue or statesmanship but because they were unable to defend their national frontiers.

THIS THESIS, carried into the thermonuclear age, has never been advanced more convincingly than by Mr. Acheson in the elegant and highly intelligent Clayton Lectures, delivered at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and now published as *Power and Diplomacy*. The lectures are unquestionably the most brilliant and authoritative statement to date of the underlying rationale of the Truman-Acheson foreign policy in theory and practice and of the Dulles foreign policy in practice. For if American foreign policy during the past five years is stripped of its oftentimes flamboyant and frequently messianic official pronouncements, its deeds are largely grounded in the Acheson doctrines. The one major difference may be that Mr. Acheson sees American national security as more inextricably bound up with Western Europe. "If Europe should, by evil chance, become subject to Soviet domination," in the words of the former Secretary, "the problems of the remainder of the non-Communist world would become unmanageable." That is, the weight of power aligned against us would be simply irresistible.

This view sets narrow limits within which policies must be evolved. The Eisenhower Administration's courtship of the former colonial areas at the time of the Suez crisis was, in Mr. Acheson's judgment, carried on at the price of the unity of the Western Alliance. He maintains that American policy since Suez has been forced belatedly to recover the lost source of Western power which had so tragically been squandered away on abstractions and illusions.

There is much terse and compressed wisdom in Mr. Acheson's little book. This observation, for example: "Britain, which once had the training and capability to manage a world system, no longer has the capability. The United States, which has the material, lacks the experience and the discipline needed for responsible management." And, on lecturing other governments on their conduct: "to express collective indignation may bring the glow of moral principles vindicated without effort; but it is usually futile, and, more often than not, harmful."

But the main thrust of Mr. Acheson's argument rests on his plea for free world unity as the cornerstone of American national security. In the struggle with Moscow the cause will be lost unless there is strength at the center, and in American foreign policy the support for a non-Communist system falls to the Western Hemisphere and Europe. If the center is weak, Mr. Acheson argues, relations with the states of Africa and Asia on the periphery will not supply strength. This conviction becomes the touchstone of every policy he advocates.

The present-day distribution of world power demands that America and Europe stand together against Russia: From 1928-55, the Soviet Union increased steel production twelve-fold while that of the United States was doubled. Since the last war, the Russian dictatorship has invested up to forty per cent of production in arms and capital goods compared to slightly more than twenty-five per cent in the United States. Even putting this ratio aside, Europe, with the largest aggregate of skilled workers in the world, remains decisive, for its steel capacity joined to Russia's would be ten per cent greater than ours and twenty-eight per cent greater by 1960. The United States without Europe would be helpless against Russian power.

These realities conditioned almost every one of Mr. Acheson's policies (NATO, European Recovery and German Rearmament) and remain all-important for him today. Power is economic no less than military, and this calls for a greater flow of investment and capital within the non-Communist world. In the nineteenth century, for example, a highly successful international political system was strengthened by successful international economic arrangements, with Britain's policies and its export of capital as the keystone of the system. Mr. Acheson quotes the Glasgow economist A. K. Cairncross: "if the same proportion of American resources were devoted to foreign investments as Britain devoted . . . in 1913, the flow of investments would require to be thirty times as great. The entire Marshall Plan would have to be carried out twice a year." Mr. Acheson is concerned less that capital be exported in any such order of magnitude than that new outlets be found and maintained for Western capital and products as part of a workable international system.

Economics at home is the key to American national power. By using its vast productive power, the United States is capable of leading the world. It also has open the choice of frittering away its power by indulging itself in vast increases in consumption and leisure, endless rounds of wage and price increases and unwillingness to accept bravely responsibility and sacrifice. But people "can never do what is necessary until they understand what is necessary, and why; and they never will understand that until their leaders in government, business and labor are willing to tell them. This takes more courage . . . than most leaders . . . have."

Power, therefore, is based essentially on industrial productivity, although it is expressed in military capabilities. And the non-Communist system, while deploring the use of force, is nevertheless compelled to achieve military strength to deter other nations. In the controversy over nuclear, limited nuclear and conventional weapons as "credible" deterrents, Mr. Acheson casts his ballot for a differentiated weapons system and



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for improved measures of defense against attack such as dispersal, shelters, and warning and interception systems. He is skeptical of "massive retaliation" as a believable deterrent—"Does any of us seriously believe that an attack on Quemoy would involve the destruction of Peiping or Moscow . . . and of New York?" He also rejects the Kissinger thesis of limited nuclear war, doubting that we can choose to do battle at times and places of our own choosing. In his view, there must be two military establishments: one for the ultimate and the other for limited war, and in both we must stand with our friends. If we say we cannot afford this, then we say that we lack the political courage to rally the Western peoples to defend their interests.

Where Mr. Acheson departs from those like Mr. Kennan, who would reexamine our European policies, is in his conception of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. To him it is the living expression of America's commitment to Europe. The triple goal—the defense of Western Europe, the liberation of Eastern Europe and German reunification—hangs on preserving NATO intact, accepting a policy of temporarily strengthening its nuclear power but pressing vigorously in the future the development of allied conventional forces which might meet any attack by other conventional troops. Political steps or bargaining which might reduce NATO's capacity in these spheres should be resisted at every point.

AGAINST THE Acheson thesis, George F. Kennan has advanced other claims and issues. In his grasp of military and economic matters he cannot hold a candle to his one-time superior, and the lectures on nuclear strategy are his weakest and most poorly informed. But Mr. Kennan is one of the few who has not clung to the skirts of official policy at the time he was serving his government, under the Truman no less than the Eisenhower Administration. Mr. Kennan has thrown out a whole catalogue of questions about the assumptions underlying American policy. He challenges the basic assumption about the nature of the Soviet threat, which even in Western Europe he found more political than military. He doubts that Europeans are doing all they could to provide for their own defense, especially since the United States is not primarily a European power. He reacts to our German policy, NATO strategy, disarmament approach and frantic stress on missiles and launching sites. He urges the Administration to examine the alternatives of "disengagement" in Central and Eastern Europe. And he insists always that his aim is to suggest "not what governments should do but what they should think about."

There are a good many ironies about Mr. Kennan's words. Although he claims for himself no more than any other citizen's right to be heard, he has been greeted as a prophet heralding an easy escape from the heavy burdens of international life. Although he describes with devastating effect the risks and limits of global talks with the Russians, he is quoted in support of parleying now at the summit with Soviet leaders. Although Dean Acheson has turned on him with incredible personal bitterness, Mr. Kennan joins hands with the Secretary in deploring moralizing, the deterioration of relations with our allies, the importance of free world unity, the fallacy both of massive retaliation and limited nuclear strategy and the risks of an all or nothing approach. The two theorists both resist the liberal illusions which see the United Nations as a substitute for foreign policy, disarmament as a simple pathway to peace, or foreign aid as a kind of panacea.

Yet, if they agree about ends, the means they envisage to achieve their ends are widely different. They disagree most dramatically on negotiations and the problem of Central Europe. Mr. Acheson is persuaded that the military bastions of NATO must be massively strengthened before negotiations come about, if they do come about. In Mr. Kennan's view, "elaborate military arrangements . . . once put in hand, have consequences. They produce counter measures. . . . And, besides, it is not easy to see what quid pro quo Moscow could be expected to extend . . . beyond the offer it has already made to refrain from stationing nuclear weapons in Eastern Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia." Mr. Kennan believes that "Our problem is no longer to prevent people from acquiring the ability to destroy us—it is too late for that. Our problem is to see that they do not have the will or the incentive to do it."

Negotiations provide the means by which Western policy-makers might reduce Soviet incentives to use force or to stumble by accident into an all-out struggle. But Mr. Kennan is profoundly skeptical that hectic encounters between senior statesmen under the glare of publicity can contribute much to peace. One by one he sets aside the various devices upon which wishful thinking tends to fasten: summit meetings, disarmament, coalition diplomacy and global solutions. In their place, he suggests the unglamorous device of attacking individual political problems, making clear what the West would be prepared and not prepared to do in specific contingencies and arriving, perhaps, by patient, quiet, traditional diplomacy, at those compromises that are least unsettling to world peace. And he would add an informational war of indefinite duration, that would allow no single falsehood or distortion from the Soviet side to go unanswered. This last point seems especially telling as one Soviet propaganda victory follows another, the latest being the Soviet proposal for U.N. control of outer space.

The substance of negotiations for Mr. Kennan is dictated by the manner in which World War II came to an end. German power was obliterated and into the newly created vacuum the power of East and West in-



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evitably flowed. The Russian Army today is only one hundred miles east of the Rhine where it has imposed its will on the satellite countries. It threatens to collide with Western troops across the uncertain boundary lines of Berlin. Most observers agree that this constitutes an unstable and dangerous situation, but up to now the search for viable measures for improving it has been unrewarding. And the arguments against any settlement in Central Europe have thus far persuaded Western policy-makers of the folly of new approaches. Mr. Kennan covers his bets by suggesting that if Russia indeed proves intransigent, "our positions should at least be such as to give promise of agreement when and if this attitude changes."

THE USUAL ARGUMENTS against a settlement and Mr. Kennan's responses to them may be worthy of enumeration. First, it is argued, a settlement would sacrifice the hopes of the satellite area for freedom. But Mr. Kennan is convinced that in the absence of a settlement there can be but two lines of development. Either there will be further violent attempts by the people to take matters into their own hands, probably with consequent defeat, despair and disillusionment if the West, as in Hungary, fails to intervene; or there will be an inescapable knuckling under as the hope of independence dies out. The one escape from this bitter dilemma, according to Mr. Kennan, would come with the departure of Soviet troops. Then there might be some chance for the evolution of indigenous institutions through which the hopes and needs of the people might be realized.

Another obstacle to agreement is, of course, the problem of Germany. This issue is one which divides Mr. Kennan from others with whom he has oftentimes been in accord. He contends that changes within present-day Germany and the rise of a new generation less susceptible to extreme nationalist tendencies warrant offering the Germans a vote of confidence. Germany at present still stands at the center of world tensions, and if the existing deadlock cannot be removed, Mr. Kennan considers peace unlikely. His approach to the German problem is daring, largely because he doubts the proposition that a future united Germany must be free to adhere to NATO. He is convinced that Russia can never be expected to abandon its gains in World War II even as part of a German settlement without some compensating withdrawal of American power, and the Communist empire could hardly survive the impression of defeat unless it could point to some *quid pro quo*. Therefore, since the powers of the victors have not lapsed in Germany, they might agree on terms that would limit Germany's future military position in Europe. This thesis is the source in part of Mr. Kennan's confidence, on one hand, that the Soviet Union might accept disengagement for Germany and Eastern Europe and, on the other, that upon the withdrawal of Russian troops, Germany would not come to dominate all of Eastern Europe.

Another stumbling-block in the search for a European settlement is the threat of East Germany. Because of the superior industrial and human resources of West Germany, Mr. Kennan minimizes this threat. He would never approve a form of German reunification that left the Communist regime as a privileged and protected faction within an all-German state, but he suggests that West Germany might be generous in defining the stages by which political, social and economic unification be brought about. He seems to consider it unimportant whether certain industries should remain socialized for the time being or whether other East German arrangements should be temporarily preserved.

The military problem is, of course, the final obstacle to disengagement. It is argued that any withdrawal would place the West at a hopeless military disadvantage. Mr. Kennan's main argument is that this question has not been seriously enough explored by our planners in the specific terms of "from where and to where, and by whom and when." Moreover, his basic thesis, which elevates the political threat above the military threat, makes him less fearful of direct Russian attack. He also points to the implications of ballistic missiles and the prospects that then both super-powers may in the end be less dependent on advanced bases. Overall, he would insist that technological and military considerations must not determine policy.

THE CONTROVERSY between the views of Mr. Acheson and Mr. Kennan will doubtless go on, regardless of the party in power. It is in essence a clash between the old and the new, between a view of the Cold War that is primarily military, technological and legal and one that is political and diplomatic, between concepts that have worked tolerably well for at least a decade and views that foreshadow new events.

As spokesmen for these divergent attitudes, Messrs. Acheson and Kennan have stated the issues more clearly than almost any of their contemporaries. They both ask that one accept assumptions about the nature of the struggle that remain essentially unprovable, and there are undeniably grave risks in either approach. Some of the differences that divide their positions relate to points of fact (e.g., military realities and Soviet tactics) on which the future may offer clarification. But whatever history reveals, Americans can be thankful now that debate has been opened on the real issues in foreign policy. Unquestionably, national security depends on a rigorous, continued discussion of our foreign policies—and the rational alternatives which are open to us. In the Acheson and Kennan treatises the preliminaries necessary for such discussion have been memorably accomplished.



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# THE WHOLE TRUTH

FOOTNOTES are a wonderful thing. They enable a writer to qualify his own sweeping statements and acknowledge exceptions to the general rules he has just laid down. Unfortunately, footnotes have disappeared from non-scholarly journalism and there is nothing to take their place.

I don't think I ever wrote a column which did not stand in need of footnotes. I don't believe many other columnists have, either. Something is always being left unsaid. It is hard, even when one is dealing with a simple matter, to tell the *whole* truth. The whole truth does not lend itself to the kind of oversimplification which seems to be unavoidable in journalism.

I have been wondering how to get around this problem. Perhaps there is no way out. It may be one of the intrinsic limitations of journalism and is probably one of the reasons why serious thinkers are so often loath to get involved in journalistic endeavors. It is also a reason why no one should take what he reads in the newspapers or magazines as the final word. Even a magazine like The Commonweal can only be suggestive. It should lead readers to books. It can never supplant them.

Let me illustrate what I am talking about by some painfully personal examples. I wrote two recent columns on the "theological lag" among American Catholics. I made a point which I still think is valid—Catholic theologians are not having the impact that Protestant thinkers like Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr have on American intellectual life today. It was all right to point that out, but I should have also noted the serious efforts being made by a number of Catholic theologians to do something about it. I should have noted such publications as *Theology Digest* published by the Jesuits at St. Mary's, Kansas, and *Spiritual Life* published by the Discalced Carmelite Fathers in Milwaukee. I should have called attention again to *Cross Currents*, the quarterly edited by Catholic laymen which has made the work of so many European theologians available to American readers. I should have noted the success Father Merton has had in presenting Catholic spirituality and ascetical doctrine to the general public. In order to develop my essential point I passed too easily over these and other hopeful signs. I did not give credit where credit was due.

Or take the half-serious column I did on *Look*. I noted that magazine's tendency to publicize already over-publicized celebrities and to be somewhat pretentious about providing the final word on subjects which were thoroughly explored elsewhere. That might have been fair enough. But I did not credit *Look*, as I should have, for sometimes venturing into fields which other mass magazines have left unexplored. *Look* has credit coming which I did not give it. It has, for instance, done some remarkable articles on the segregation and government secrecy questions which I am sure required editorial courage. The statements I made about its waiting until everyone had his say were much too sweeping.

It is not just a question of accuracy, though that is highly important. The problem goes deeper, because it is almost impossible for a journalistic writer to deal with any subject without encountering the human feelings of others. There are men and women behind all the ideas, institutions and movements one deals with. They are usually good people, doing their work conscientiously, often anonymously. When the thing they are privately identified with is oversimplified or given only partial justice, they are wounded.

I can understand that. I have had my own share of critical slings and arrows and know how bitter a person can feel when he is damned for the bad and given no credit for the good things in his work.

What about this question of the *whole* truth? How much emphasis should a writer or publicist put on it? A great deal, my conscience tells me. It also tells me that is where most of us fail. We pick and choose our truths to serve personal or polemical purposes. It ends up that the truth serves us rather than the other way around. When we want to damn someone or something, we hesitate to say anything good about that person or thing, unless there is some polemical value in the concession. Such an admission, we feel, might blunt the point we are trying to make. To protect others from being misled, we tend to depict partial evils as total evil.

By the same token, the good we are anxious to propagate is portrayed in straight simple lines. Any suggestion that it is usually found in something less than a pure state is regarded as treason. So we often leave our readers in a black-and-white world of villains and heroes and in the process do manifold injustices to the people we are writing about.

Why? Not because we coldbloodedly want to tamper with the truth; we do it because we think we are fulfilling our obligations to the truth or at least as much truth as we are ready to exploit. Most of us are a little afraid of the *whole* truth. We suspect that knowledge of it will upset the "faithful" and implicitly help the "enemy." We tend to play the papa-knows-best role where our own pet ideas, prejudices, commitments and causes are involved. The *whole* truth is so much truth, we find ourselves doubting that most people can bear it.

JOHN COGLEY.



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*The question of the remarkable acceptance of "By Love Possessed" remains to be answered*

# Cozzens Dispossessed

by JAMES FINN

JAMES GOULD COZZENS is a practiced novelist working within definite, serious limitations, many of which are conscious. His gifts are sufficient to have won for him, over the years, a small but devoted body of readers, and in 1948 he achieved a degree of public and critical acclaim with a civilized war novel, *Guard of Honor,* for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Although his earlier novels were largely ignored by the little magazines and the literary quarterlies, he was praised in the pages of the *Atlantic* and the *New Yorker* and was highly admired by the late Bernard De Voto, a critic who was justly regarded as having an almost unfailing instinct for the best of middlebrow writing.

With the publication of *By Love Possessed,* however, public and critical attitude seemed to undergo a sea-change. The initial reviews of quite respectable and honest critics burgeoned with phrases that would have done honor to another Dickens or Dostoevsky. And other reviewers, who in such matters are inclined to follow suit, followed suit. The book shot to the top of the best-seller list, where it has since remained. Except for those Catholic critics who objected to the book on the grounds that it is anti-Catholic and treats sex too explicitly, differences between the reviewers lay principally in the varying degrees of enthusiasm they expressed.

More recently, Dwight MacDonald, incensed at what he regards as a dereliction of critical discrimination and judgment, has charged full force into the better-known and most influential reviewers. His vorpal sword goes snicker-snack and "critical" heads fall left and right. He supports his attack with a fairly close consideration of the novel. Since he sometimes makes judgments of literary merit apart from literary considerations, his conclusions are occasionally naive and unfair, but those who wish to read what is, and will probably remain, the most vigorous case against *By Love Possessed* can find Mr. MacDonald's entertaining, caustic article in the January *Commentary.* Another general and more balanced but also unfavorable article appeared in the *New Republic,* where Irving Howe correctly pointed out that the extraordinary circumstances attending the reception of the novel suggest "the presence of a new cultural problem," so that any discussion of the book now demands a discussion of its public life. To appreciate the full extent of this problem, however, one should see *By Love Possessed* against the background of Cozzens' earlier novels and their relatively private, if not indeed subterranean, existence.

JAMES Gould Cozzens turned out four youthful novels that he has since disowned before he wrote two short books, *S. S. San Pedro* and *Castaway.* Although *S. S. San Pedro* does not invite a second reading, it has a rapid narrative pace and a sure, unencumbered style. Reading this with the perspective provided by his later works, one can find here evidence of Cozzens' fondness for the fact and an interest in the clash between a recognizable objective code and responsible, individual decision. *Castaway* tells of a man alone and hiding out in a large department store. Despite all the material resources at his disposal he is unable to sustain the pressures of his own existence and rapidly disintegrates. Although this is an impressive tale, those who single it out for special praise pay Mr. Cozzens a dubious compliment, for it represents a side of his talent he has not since developed and remains something of a sport among his published works.

Between those two works, Mr. Cozzens wrote *The Last Adam,* a novel which suggests the direction of his later and more ambitious efforts. In the narrow, enclosed society of a small New England town, the conventionally accepted codes are brought to a sudden, open test and are revealed to be inadequate to the realities of moral behavior. With this novel Cozzens seems to have found the form most congenial to the presentation of his major theme and the exploitation of his own talents and interest. His next two novels, for instance, reveal nothing new in his development, although it should probably be noted that with *Men and Brethren* he nicely combines an increasing control of the complexities of a social group with his earlier, cleaner style. *The Just and the Unjust* and *Guard of Honor,* which appeared in the forties, are progressively longer, denser and more intricately constructed works. Here he shows that he is capable of handling an im-

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pressive amount of data and of considering quite complex relations. But there is no real development here, nothing new or original; there is only refinement and extension of previous attainments.

The characteristics of "the Cozzens novel," at least before *By Love Possessed,* are quite marked. With little qualification it is fair to say that the Cozzens novel focuses attention on a range of people within a limited, enclosed society, several of whom are further set apart by being from some professional class, e.g., lawyers, soldiers, doctors. The professional background is not only the source for the highly developed background and insistently technical vocabulary Cozzens often employs, but it provides an objective, recognizable code to which the major characters subscribe and with which they come in conflict.

Cozzens can develop a relatively straightforward narrative, but his novels are so structured—many characters and incidents related within a brief time interval —that he relies heavily upon flashbacks and sudden shifts of action. His technique is that of the nineteenth century novelist, minus the originality and audacity that was part of their achievement; it derives little, which means it has profited little, from the successes and failures of modern experiment in the novel. The prose is unencumbered and sound enough to respond to the demands which are placed upon it.

The crux of the Cozzens novel brings the principal character to a new level of "maturity," to a position where he can sustain an unblinked view of life, free from "early involuntary illusions." The more thoughtful characters see their growth in terms of replacing illusion with reason, fancy with fact. And there are, imbedded in the novel, homely anecdotes and apothegms embodying this wisdom.

In *Guard of Honor,* for instance, a principal character states: "Whether you like it or not, there are things you can't buck—no matter how much you want to, how vital it is to you. A parachutist who jumps from an airplane cannot climb back, no matter what. Even if he sees he'll be killed when he lands he can't. Gravity is a condition not a theory." Much of the incident of this novel is designed to emphasize, even for characters with wide experience, the difference which exists between merely theoretical considerations and the actual conditions to which they supposedly apply.

Even from this necessarily simplified account of Cozzens' work it is clear that, before he wrote *By Love Possessed,* Cozzens had arrived at a body of thematic material and had devised a form by which he could control and shape it. Given the prominence of *By Love Possessed* it is natural to ask whether this novel represents a departure which carries him quite beyond his earlier achievements or whether he is only now receiving praise which he has long deserved.

IN *By Love Possessed* the putative hero, a fifty-four-year-old lawyer, Arthur Winner, undergoes within a period of forty-nine hours a series of incidents which cause him to reflect and to pass judgment upon his past life, and—most important—to accept with new awareness his own limitations within the circumstances of his life. There are the familiar dichotomies between theories and conditions, fact and fancy, reason and emotion, the ideal and the actual, the desirable and the possible. The narrative is developed in conventional and unimaginative fashion with flashbacks, awkwardly related simultaneous events, and large inert chunks of unassimilated information. The most notable changes are in Cozzens' style and the more overt and extended philosophizing, in which both characters and narrator engage. Cozzens has at his command a clean, serviceable prose, but here he luxuriates in inverted syntax, convoluted sentences, pyrotechnical punctuation and the vocabulary of a pedantic lexicographer. The result is a prose that is, for long stretches, singularly costive.

The way in which Cozzens' "philosophy" is developed in this book is open to such easy, and possibly superficial, criticism that those who were called upon to write puffs for the book early attempted to divert it. Mr. Clifton Fadiman, for instance, said that no intelligent Catholic would find the book anti-Catholic—a statement no intelligent Fadiman should have made. Given the relatively coherent set of beliefs and attitudes which are asserted in the book, there is a sense in which it can meaningfully be said that the book is anti-religious. It does not, of course, follow, as some Catholic reviewers assumed, that the book is therefore bad or even faulty. An artistic work could successfully absorb and utilize an even more forceful rejection of religion than is present in *By Love Possessed.*

An examination of two scenes in which Catholicism is significant reveals, however, real flaws in the novel. In one protracted scene, Arthur Winner, who thinks that given differences in religion it is "generally wiser not to discuss them," is trapped into a discussion with Mrs. Pratt, a Catholic. Her prattle, to use Cozzens' term, is a repellent combination of sense and nonsense, religion and religiosity. Arthur Winner is able to stand her off well enough. ("I notice that people are usually inclined to think whatever they believe is necessarily true, and only reasonable," is one of his dry, sensible responses.) And when a snake appears in the garden, his calm, rational reaction contrasts markedly with her irrational fear. But not until Mrs. Pratt is forced to ask directions to the bathroom can Arthur Winner feel easily superior. In his eyes the demands of nature have scattered the fancies of Mrs. Pratt: "But this was too bad of fact! At fact's surely unkindest prank of all, Arthur Winner must protest, generously indignant. Fact had right and license to punish fancy and to



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dash silly hope; fact was always going too far, fact stooped too low." This is, surely, making too much of the fact, and is no proper response to Mrs. Pratt's statements. The difference between the reader's reaction and what Cozzens obviously intended is great and damaging to Arthur Winner. Cozzens clearly does not know the character he has created.

In another scene, the crippled Julius Penrose, who apparently impressed many reviewers with his deep, dark intelligence, becomes concerned with Catholicism. Although he believes that "what a man's religious beliefs are should never be inquired into," he wishes to learn more about the religion to which his wife is drawn. As he explains to Arthur, "the subject's no small one. I asked a bookstore to inquire." With almost equal amounts of sincerity, diligence and naiveté he reads standard works on theology, apologetics and canon law and then discourses on Catholicism with olympian detachment and authority. This performance, from a person whose rational conduct the novel offers as a standard, is so dramatically unconvincing as to make him appear foolish—and such a representation is fatal to his position in the novel.

The anti-Catholicism is damaging to the novel, therefore, because it is inexpertly handled and also because it occupies an incommensurate amount of space in the book. What can be said of his treatment of Catholics applies equally well, though to a lesser extent, to his treatment of other minority groups. It is difficult not to believe that Mr. Cozzens' sense of artistic form has been violated by too many ideas.

In spite of these strictures I agree with Irving Howe who said that it would be "a mistake to charge Cozzens with the garden variety of prejudice." The apparent attacks on all who are not white, Anglo-Saxon and secular is more an attack on the generally dominant liberal ethos of the last several decades and a crotchety return to earlier and, I think, more provincial values. That it is done in the name of abjuring sentiment, fancy and simple good wishes makes it superficially more palatable to many who have wearied of the admittedly wearisome excesses of recent decades. But it would be a mistake to think that it represents the result of profound thought or analysis.

THE QUESTION of Cozzens' sudden, remarkable acceptance remains to be answered. He does, I think, have very real abilities. He can handle complex relations so that one can, realizing the ambiguities of the situation, sympathize equally with two opposing characters. He does have control of tremendous detail; one must be impressed by such knowledge even though one is not equally impressed that he feels called upon to display it so profusely. His work is firmly rooted in the harsh, gritty detail of daily circumstance, which makes more regrettable the rather ordinary novels that are the result. Cozzens does show man as a limited, contingent being subject to sudden disrupting forces, which is why he appeals, I presume, to many Catholics; for, finding in Cozzens' books a picture of fallen man, they are able to see him as a modern Catholic novelist *manqué*. If he does not see the Redemption, at least he clearly shows forth the need for it.

But these qualities by themselves could not account for the reception of *By Love Possessed*. The more convincing reason is that offered by two critics writing from distinctly different viewpoints. In a highly favorable reappraisal in the *American Scholar*, John Ward wrote that "Literary fashions are not purely literary; they indicate states of mind, and the American mind was not in a state to appreciate Cozzens." But now "History has finally prepared for him an audience that can share his angle of vision," and further, that "the acceptance of Cozzens today may be as much a function of the intellectual climate as was his neglect before." In his own way Mr. Howe said much the same thing. Mr. Cozzens, he wrote, "has not tried to adjust himself to the mood of the moment, he has not favored the *Zeitgeist*. . . . It is the weary *Zeitgeist* that has finally limped round to him."

What *has* History done for the American mind since the thirties? What road *has* the *Zeitgeist* traveled since Cozzens found his major themes? In the complex history of the last several decades some landmarks and symbols must mark the course. The generally coherent set of liberal attitudes which set the tone of political and intellectual life in the thirties was already breaking up before our entrance into World War II. We emerged with greater responsibility, a new awareness of our limitations and a growing skepticism about wartime agreements. Since then the Chambers-Hiss case, the policy of containment, the Korean conflict, McCarthyism, the cold war with its "balance of terror," the scientific competition represented by the earth satellites—all these caused us to distrust appearance and look to fact, to replace the "utopian" thinker with the knowledgeable man of experience. We have left imaginative encompassing ideas for the myriad, hard fact, for we are newly fearful and uncertain and we would not be deceived. We have had, in the words of Julius Penrose, enough of the "rabble of professional friends of man, social worker liberals, and practitioners of universal brotherhood." As for religion, it is only substituting faith for credulity, another means of self-deception.

This is what we have come to; this, at least, is the mood to which Cozzens addresses himself so successfully. Lacking true taste and critical judgment, he is unlikely to survive beyond his own period. For, as Henry James said, "the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer." And the mind of James Gould Cozzens is, finally, unoriginal, unimaginative, uninteresting.



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*The A.F.L.-C.I.O. response to attempts to form an organizers' union added injury to insult*

# Labor's Glass House

by JOHN C. CORT

THE ACID TEST of sincerity for all guardians of public and private morals always is the question: "Do you practice what you preach?" In recent months this test has been applied to the members of the executive council of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., with results that demonstrate again a few crusty old platitudes about the vagaries of human nature.

On March 11, 1957, just about one year ago, a group of organizers for the national A.F.L.-C.I.O. met in Atlanta, Georgia, and organized themselves into a new union, the Field Representatives Federation. (One member of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. executive council cracked, "They couldn't organize anybody else, so they organized themselves.")

The F.R.F. voted to ask the A.F.L.-C.I.O. for recognition and also for the privilege of affiliation. They also elected temporary officers, of whom the most active has been Robert Christofferson, the secretary-treasurer, field organizer stationed in North Carolina.

In answer to their request, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. dispatched John Livingston, director of organization and former vice-president of the United Auto Workers, to meet with the officers of F.R.F. in Atlanta on April 24. Mr. Livingston expressed his personal opposition to the idea of an organizers' union, but said that these were not necessarily the opinions of President Meany, Secretary-Treasurer Schnitzler or the executive council. He said he would report back. Meanwhile, the organization grew rapidly as A.F.L.-C.I.O. organizers all over the country, alarmed by rumors of lay-offs on the merged national staff of 215, hurried to sign up.

If the A.F.L.-C.I.O. was waiting for legal clarification of their responsibilities in this matter, this came down from on high in unmistakable language on May 6th in a 5-4 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court. This decision reversed a 3-2 vote of the National Labor Relations Board that labor unions are not employers within the meaning of the Act. Actually, the Court ruled unanimously that unions are employers within the meaning of the Act. The 5-4 split was on a secondary but nonetheless crucial point as to whether the N.L.R.B. could refuse jurisdiction in a case involving charges of unfair labor practice against a union (the Teamsters) by another union (the Office Employees). The majority ruled that the N.L.R.B. must assume jurisdiction.

Prior to the Teamsters case, the only other Board ruling that involved unions in their capacity as employers had been handed down in 1951, in the Airline Pilots Association case. There the Board ruled that union organizers did not fall into the category of supervisors or persons having access to confidential information and thus had a right to have their own union. The Supreme Court decision of last May naturally restored this decision to full power and force.

However, if Robert Christofferson and friends thought that the A.F.L.-C.I.O. was going to follow the Supreme Court, they were soon to be disillusioned. The executive council, meeting later in the month, discussed the subject at length. One member, it is reported, suggested that they "lop off the heads of the ringleaders." Eventually, the vote was to refer the matter to President George Meany.

MR. MEANY met with the F.R.F. on July 1st. Neither side would speak for publication, but the story was that it was "inconclusive." Whatever it was, F.R.F. filed a petition with the N.L.R.B. a few weeks later asking for certification as collective bargaining agent for the organizers. The fat was definitely in the **fire.**

There then followed a meeting with President Meany which marked the high-water mark of the organizers' attempt to organize. At this meeting, in mid-September, Meany agreed to recommend to the executive council the following proposition: "Recognition of F.R.F., as a local of an agreed-to international, as collective bargaining representative of the staff; a union shop; dues check-off; seniority in lay-offs and recalls; grievance and arbitration procedure; the contract to last for one year with discussions during the contract term regarding wages, fringe benefits and working conditions, with agreement on any of these matters to be incorporated into the contract."

George Meany did recommend this agreement to the council at its meeting on October 24th, but a few days later he had to report to the leaders of the F.R.F. that the council "refuses to recognize, bargain or deal



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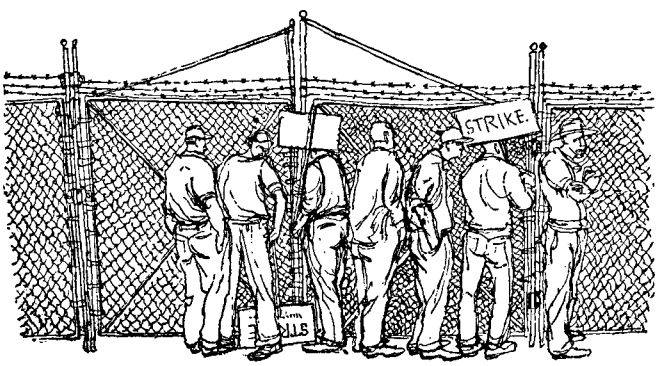
in any manner with F.R.F. or any other organization set up by the staff as its representative." What the council suggested instead was a meeting of the staff with Mr. Meany at which the staff would elect a representative, or representatives, to take up grievances and discuss conditions of employment. This meeting and election would have been run by Meany.

Students of the labor movement will recognize this scheme as a typical "employee representation plan" which anti-union employers used to push, back in the days before the Wagner Act when it was perfectly okay for employers to organize unions of their own employees. The F.R.F. also recognized the beast and, by referendum of its membership, voted by a ratio of thirteen to one to reject the offer and proceed with its petition to the N.L.R.B. for an election. Its leaders, however, thanked President Meany for his cooperation and support.

Hearings on the petition were held in November. The A.F.L.-C.I.O., represented by three attorneys, appeared, presented witnesses and argued that the field representatives should not be unionized because they were "managerial employees" who had very little supervision and were mostly on their own. The F.R.F. attorney, however, was able to bring out that there were 46 supervisors for the 215 organizers: Director Livingston, four assistants, 23 regional directors and 18 assistant regional directors, a ratio of one supervisor for every 4.7 organizers. He also showed that the organizers must make bi-weekly reports of their activities to their directors. As of this writing, the Board has not ruled on the petition for an election.

MEANWHILE, the second convention of the merged A.F.L.-C.I.O. was approaching. The international executive board of the American Newspaper Guild, an affiliated union, voted unanimously to urge the convention to "go on record as urging the executive council to reconsider its position and agree to recognize" the F.R.F. This resolution was never presented to the convention, but was referred directly to the executive council.

The next move was the shocker. By vote of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. executive committee, an inner circle that includes such labor stalwarts as George Meany, William F. Schnitzler, Walter Reuther, James Carey, David Dubinsky, David McDonald, George Harrison and Harry Bates, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. discharged seventy organizers—of whom fourteen were retired on pensions—and transferred thirty more from the organizing staff to a new "speakers' bureau" in the Department of Public Relations. (The logic behind this last move is hard to figure, unless it was designed to make them ineligible to vote in an N.L.R.B. election.) Robert Christofferson, the top leader and guiding spirit of the F.R.F., was among those discharged outright. Of the F.R.F.'s executive committee of thirteen members, a total of eight were separated from the payroll.




In a telegram to President Meany and Secretary-Treasurer Schnitzler the F.R.F. protested the action: "There was no prior warning. On the contrary there were assurances from President Meany as late as October 25 to us personally that no such action would take place. There was no consultation with the organizers affected. Seniority was not considered. We have been told there is no right of appeal—that the discharges, involuntary retirements and forced transfers are irrevocable. Had the average employer done what you have done—no matter what the reasons—you and your colleagues on the A.F.L.-C.I.O. executive committee . . . would have been the first to raise your voices on behalf of the workers so treated. But in your own house—representing the greatest free labor movement in the world, dedicated to integrity, ethical practices and clean, honest unionism—you have done what you condemn other employers for doing."

In Washington, Secretary-Treasurer Schnitzler so badly miscalculated the temper of his staff that he tried to present gold watches to two veteran employees who were getting the axe. According to Drew Pearson, one of them, Lew Hines, said to Mr. Schnitzler: "You are not going to give me any stinking watch. You are not going to add insult to injury. You can take your watch and stick it back in the drawer."

Speaking for the other employees as well as for himself, Hines told Schnitzler, "The way you have handled this has been perfectly lousy." The other watch recipient, Miss Hollace Ransdell, also refused her gift with some indignation.

At their February meeting the members of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. council, gathered in Miami, ignored an appeal from the F.R.F. for a conference to discuss ways and means of softening the blow. Prior to this the F.R.F. had suggested the possibility of voluntary wage cuts by the staff to make it possible to keep everyone employed. All suggestions and appeals fell on indifferent ears.

THAT BRINGS us up to date. It is possible that the F.R.F. may yet win an N.L.R.B. election, al-



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though victory is by no means as certain as it was before the mass firings, as always an effective union-busting device. In any event, it is difficult to estimate whether victory or defeat will be the more embarrassing for the A.F.L.-C.I.O. If the F.R.F. wins, then the A.F.L.-C.I.O. will be forced to reverse its whole policy. If the F.R.F. loses, then A.F.L.-C.I.O. organizers in the field will have to try to answer such questions as, "If unions are so hot, how come you guys voted against a union for yourselves?"

The A.F.L.-C.I.O. and many international and local unions have for years had contracts with such unions as the Office Employees and the Newspaper Guild for employees on their clerical and publications staffs. So why the objection to a union for organizers?

The stuff about "managerial employees" is only a small part of it, and in any case the Supreme Court and the Airline Pilots case of 1951 answered that objection. The big fact is that organizers are the key employees in any labor organization, and up to date they are mostly unorganized.

The key to the executive council's opposition (it is reported that Walter Reuther spoke for half an hour against the very idea of recognition) lies in the members' fear that the F.R.F., might catch on and organize the staffs of their own international unions. Right now Reuther's word, his very whisper, is the be-all and end-all in the Auto Workers. True, he runs a democratic union, but he has so mastered and brought under control the representative bodies that run the U.A.W. that no one can oppose his ukase with any hope of success. If the U.A.W. representatives were organized in a local of the F.R.F., however, this might well be something that even Walter Reuther could not bend to his will, and there lies the danger.

All this may explain, but it does not, of course, excuse. Reuther and his colleagues may say that union organizing is a high calling that cannot be discussed on the same level as ordinary jobs in a factory or office. And it is true that it may be high enough for them. They are at the top and the air is always sweeter and the view more inspiring at the upper levels. But Murray Kempton, in one of his bitter columns on this subject, has answered this objection with his usual eloquence and perception, combined with some little exaggeration:

"All this is the price of middle age. Your typical field organizer has put years in the job and is unfit for anything else except possibly employer labor relations, which is a shameful fate. It is a long time since he marched in a united army for endless frontiers. The army's advance has ceased; it is bivouacked in lonely towns with no immediate prospect that it will lift its banner and march again. It is time to think of pensions. The complaints of one's wife drown out the fading rumble of the distant drum. The liberation of the toilers is no longer a consuming dream; like all other dreams, it has been reduced simply to a career."

Extract the cynical disenchantment from this, and we have an important truth: the old crusaders need protection like everybody else. And Walter Reuther and friends, who should know better, have proven once again that the captains and the kings seldom give up their power without a struggle. In that they are no different from Henry Ford I or Louis XIV.

It is ironic that the cost of keeping on those seventy organizers is estimated to be about the same as that which the A.F.L.-C.I.O. has voted to devote to an expanded program of public relations. For the truth is that it will take the public relations department far more than that sum to undo the harm this affair has already done to labor's cause inside and outside the movement.

Basically, the issue remains very simple: "Physician, heal thyself."

# THE STAGE

## THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION

MRS. KETTI FRINGS' dramatization of Thomas Wolfe's novel of remembered youth is an act of responsible energy, full of distinction and serious intent, and much to be honored. As an event on our stage, "Look Homeward, Angel" *(at the Barrymore)* seems to me the most skillful dramatic fashioning of fiction—the most artfully "built," least gutted—I have yet encountered. Emotionally, Mrs. Frings ranges over deep soils of life, and always with authority: she is her own mistress, well at ease. And in the more complex arts of theater, "Look Homeward, Angel" offers among its players instances of brilliant study and charm of personality to which we must respond with pleasure.

Yet it is not an important play: of that I am certain, however graceless it may seem to insist on a point which has been generously burked elsewhere.

Mrs. Frings' best effects, her most potent successes of mood and tone, are essentially domestic—all that quite as it should be, of course, in a work which is the very bloody issue of the wound of family life. Still so: there is a reverberation to the end of this first act of "Look Homeward, Angel"—an image of the driven Eliza Gant alone in her scrubby garden, sloughing off her jeering, didactic rigors as twilight falls, and hoping hesitantly for some grateful step of love, while in the distance an echo of "Poor Butterfly" mocks her—there is a dilation of feeling here which is the closest the play comes to anything like poetic realism. And further on, though not again so tenderly, Mrs. Frings suggests with



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flashes of intimacy some of the crazy venom and need and tragic isolation of families, their perpetual stalking wars of secret independence and love, in which love itself is the casualty, and we come to recognize independence for what Shaw justly called it: middle-class blasphemy. Mrs. Frings is faithful and true here, and continually various, relieving the stress, resisting the easy solicitation to whip her motifs to some insistent froth of significance.

How different in this from Mr. Joshua Logan and the authors of "Blue Denim" *(at the Playhouse),* who inflate an interesting but familiar anecdote of domestic anxiety into grand sociological and dramatic pretense, and by heavy inflection, push its admirable reportage into the rancorously banal. How different, too, from "Long Day's Journey Into Night," where mind, memory, the nerves and the heart are always under some honing knife: where we want to scream out against such punitive assault, and a literalness which hoards every crumb of its broken truth. We are grateful to Mrs. Frings for her tactful rejection of the first excess; yet what is it which floods O'Neill's excess, giving it some radiance and dark lustre which "Look Homeward, Angel" could never command? Precisely some poetic essence and finality, a quality, almost an abstraction, free of what is here merely incidental and of the moment—that "something there where something was not before," as Mr. Stark Young has it, with his image of the moon in water "incredibly translated by a certain nameless difference born anew."

There is no way, for me at least, to be more articulate here: these are the subtle victories, and cruel, too, of art. Mr. Harold Clurman has expanded the same theme in a passage I should like to quote: " 'Look Homeward, Angel' as a play harks back to the realism of the twenties which lacked poetic extension or transfiguration. The shock of recognition is present—and no doubt still valuable—but not the shock of surprise (or illumination) within what one recognizes. We are reminded of what we are acquainted with in life; but we are not transported to any area of feeling or knowledge beyond what our observation—alerted by previous experience with this type of realism—has already provided us."

No one will deny the emotional solicitation of "Look Homeward, Angel," and it is difficult to imagine a person of sensibility resisting tears at its image of leave-taking, with its immemorial graven lines cut out of the harsh necessities of time. Something wanders about this scene with vagrant pathos, some lyrical remembrance, perhaps, some hot grief of recollection, but it is *behind* the play, not embodied in it, to be released into a final reality by terrible pressures. There is, one recalls, that pure concentration at the close of "Uncle Vanya" and "The Three Sisters"—plays in which the prose matter and poetic ideas are not far removed from this Wolfe substance—and then, beyond that, some strange, incontestable sense of a reality of all truth and time seeming to rise out of the faded, immobile figures, seeming to hover in the mirroring air. It is this metamorphosis which "Look Homeward, Angel" quite honorably fails to achieve.

The theater life of Mrs. Frings' dramatization is most efficiently deployed by the director, Mr. George Roy Hill, despite his failure with the impossible grotesquerie of that moment when Eliza and her husband turn in rage on the house which has bled them juiceless. Mr. Hill's neutral tone, however, seems often inadequate, and one has no small inkling of what may be his own commitments of theatrical poetics. Mr. Hugh Griffith is randy and large-hewn in the scene just mentioned, as he is securely powerful everywhere: this is the kind of realistic performance which can spring only out of classical experience. Miss Frances Hyland has a delicately exact sense of period, potent in those moments when she suggests, luminously, a Sargent figure burnished by Southern grace. In her several fragments, Miss Rosemary Murphy gives the occasion its truest stylistic pitch: her nagging, Gothic gauntness is pitilessly right, and shows extraordinary imaginative discernment and projection.

Mr. Anthony Perkins is a young man of extremely persuasive sympathetic charm—charm, moreover, which he seems genuinely not to exploit. He is the latest image of that resilient figure in our national gallery of personality, the vulnerable, questing colt, whose appeal is not to our judgment or admiration or envy, but to our love. It is a "type"—encountered less in life than in literature and theater and ideal fantasy—embodied most beautifully, and with the richest private drama, by the late novelist James Agee, and its characteristic lament will always be, as it is in Agee's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915,* to those who "will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am." Mr. Perkins creates all his images of youth and quixotic energy and visionary passion with touching simplicity; the very congruence of his personality, however, with the material it must represent, makes one reluctant, at this point, to confer the praises of art.

Miss Jo Van Fleet sets the definitive tone of realism: she seems to hold the play in fluency, give it its staying power—its harsh actuality and, ironically, its prose limitation. (Language and motifs, of course, do this ultimately.) Miss Van Fleet's incisive power of study has taken her deeply into a role which is alien to her in temperament and age, in racial zest and endurance: she projects magisterially a coherent dramatic image, but one senses in it some subtle want of the authentic. She reflects here, I rather imagine, the inadequate substance of the role—an inadequacy her fine taste will not let her disguise. May one note, too, an incidental aspect of this occasion: that Miss Van Fleet's range is



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wider than her recent appearances would seem to suggest. It would be lamentable if so supple, brilliant and responsible an American talent were to be swathed in the mantle of perpetual motherhood.

Mr. Jo Mielziner's scenic designs, finally, are eloquent blends of the poetic and the realistic: especially the second, in which a tangible Southern actuality is strangely heightened and extended into the symbolic.

RICHARD HAYES.

# THE SCREEN

## EVERYMAN IN HIS HUMOR

EAGER TO put aside his income tax blanks and other April woes for a couple of hours, everyman might find relaxation and a couple of laughs in some new comedies. Certainly Danny Kaye, who is very merry as "Merry Andrew," should give anyone a lift. "Merry Andrew" is really a vehicle for Kaye; and its script, based on a Paul Gallico story about an English schoolteacher who gets mixed up with a circus, provides plenty of opportunity for display of the Kaye charm and clowning. Whether he is falling off a bicycle, being bullied by his father, digging for a long-lost statue of Pan or tussling with a circus owner (Salvatore Baccaloni) and his five muscular sons, Danny Kaye is his irrepressible self and the epitome of the underdog who rises to every occasion.

Although Michael Kidd, the movie's director, gives the entire cast something to do, it is Kaye who carries the picture. He delights his young charges with songs (by Saul Chaplin and Johnny Mercer) like "Pipes of Pan," "You Can't Always Have What You Want" and "The Square of the Hypotenuse." He keeps two heroines in suspense: Patricia Cutts as his fiancée at school, and Pier Angeli as the circus girl who finds him irresistible. And he keeps the audience amused with his unorthodox antics in the classroom, his slapstick in the lions' cage and his romp through the circus. Although "Merry Andrew" might have had more song-and-dance numbers like "Salute" in which the whole circus cuts loose, admirers of Kaye won't complain.

"PARIS HOLIDAY" not only keeps Bob Hope in action but is also an original story written by Robert Hope and a production by *Mr.* Robert Hope. "Paris Holiday" has several other assets, including Fernandel as a French comedian whose family was so poor they could afford only one name, Martha Hyer as an employee of the American Embassy in Paris, Anita Ekberg as a seductive woman of mystery whose job it is to get a certain script away from Hope, and other people who play straight men for the film's many zany jokes and situations. The fun starts on the *Ile de France* and continues in Paris.

Although the plot doesn't make much sense, it is replete with jokes. Hope and Fernandel work beautifully together, each out-mugging the other. Even when scenes falter and the humor stretches rather thin, they give out with plenty of friendly banter and continue to have a good time.

MY ONLY argument with "Teacher's Pet" is that it is too long. It has an amusing script, written by Fay and Michael Kanin, about a hard-boiled city editor of a newspaper, proud that he rose the hard way and condescending to a teacher of journalism. Under George Seaton's direction, Clark Gable and Doris Day play these lead roles with a nice comic touch, and they are excellently supported by Gig Young as a professor of psychology who knows all the answers—except how to win Doris. Gig Young's morning-after routine is riotous and so is Mamie Van Doren's satire on a strip-teaser. Producer William Perlberg decided to fancy-up the city room of his picture's newspaper by having a lot of real newspaper men and women around for authenticity. Not only does the audience get the antics of Clark, Doris, Gig and associates but they see a city room as it really is.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.


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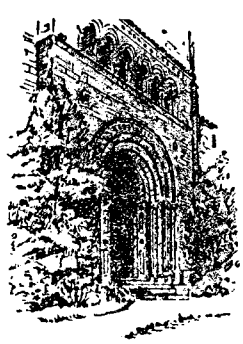

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# Revealing Account of Joyce's Early Years

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER. By Stanislaus Joyce. Viking. $5.

By DAVID H. GREENE

THE HERO of Joyce's *novella* "The Dead"—who has always struck me as being a more revealing self-portrait than the caricature known as Stephen Dedalus—is an unhappy young man whose tragedy is summed up in his pretentious and unIrish first name, Gabriel. Gabriel Conroy's mother, who was the brains of the Morkan family, had chosen the names of her children carefully, "for she was very sensible of the dignity of family life" and thought that calling them Gabriel and Constantine would distinguish them in a world of Pats and Mikes. Joyce's first name was Irish enough, and his mother was only the daughter of a traveling liquor salesman. But his brother's name was Stanislaus—after his father's middle name—and one can see from Stanislaus' painful book about his famous brother's childhood and youth how he and his brother, and presumably a large brood of brothers and sisters, suffered from the displacement resulting from John Stanislaus' inability to reconcile his gentlemanly pretensions with the facts of his wasted life.

Stanislaus' caustic account of his father—"my father belonged to the class of the deserving poor, that is to say, to the class of people who richly deserve to be poor"—cannot compare with Stephen Dedalus's litany of his father's pathetic accomplishments in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. But it has the ring of truth, even if the bitterness sometimes drowns the perspective. "My father had, no doubt, begun with the intention of giving his promising young son the best education the country had to offer a boy of his class and religion, but after a very few years that good intention, unfulfilled, formed just a minor item of the wreckage in the gradual ruin of his affairs." This sounds as though James Joyce received little or no education, but Clongowes Wood, Belvedere, and University College Dublin—all private schools catering to tuition-paying students—were the best Ireland had to offer to a boy of Joyce's class and religion. Joyce was a brilliant student and a prize winner, however, and one gathers that the cost of tuition did not weigh heavily on a man "quite unburdened by any sense of responsibility" towards his large family.

Continuing his denunciation of his father, Stanislaus chronicles his intermittent and ambiguous employment, his drinking, his unreliable temper and his "thoroughly Irish repugnance to paying rent." The Joyces were evicted many times, from houses generally in respectable neighborhoods. "I have before me a list of nine addresses in about eleven years, though I cannot be sure of the order. In the beginning two furniture vans and a float were required for the moving; in the end it was just a float. The *bourdon* of these recollections is my father's tipsy boasting, 'I'll show them a trick, Just a wait. I'm not dead yet.' "

Joyce's mother died when she was only forty-four, a year after her oldest son James had graduated from college. The account of her death, which the author of *Ulysses* transformed for his own purposes, is Stanislaus' final assault on his father. "One evening towards the end, my father came home 'screwed,' as Aunt Josephine called it, after having drowned his sorrow copiously with various friends, and went into my mother's room. . . . He walked about the room muttering and then, coming to the foot of the bed, he blurted out, 'I'm finished. I can't do any more. If you can't get well, die. Die and be damned to you!' Forgetting everything, I shouted 'You swine!' and made a swift movement towards him. Then to my horror I saw that my mother was struggling to get out of the bed. I hurried to her at once, while Jim led my father out of the room."

His father who had twelve children in all, died in 1931 at the age of eighty-eight. Of all the shades that haunt the memory of the unhappy Stanislaus in this book, his is easily the most compelling. But according to Stanislaus the father's great influence was on his brother. Stanislaus looked to his mother and acquired her "narrow-minded wisdom of inflexible judgment." But to Jim she was "the type of woman who fears and, with weak insistence and disapproval, tries to hinder the adventures of the spirit." Jim looked to the father, and "those in whom the father's influence prevails generally show a broader humanity." Stanislaus may have thought that he had exorcised the influence, if not the memory, of his father from his own life. But the picture he paints of John Stanislaus Joyce has more reality and more humanity than the figure we know as Simon Dedalus, and the memory of the mother's death which haunts Stephen Dedalus through the pages of *Ulysses* makes one wonder if Stanislaus hasn't got the positions reversed.

Despite its petty contentiousness and its ill-humor, *My Brother's Keeper* is a revealing and affecting account of Joyce's early years. One might demur, however, at accepting the enthusiastic endorsement in T. S. Eliot's preface: "Possessed as he was by the subject of his memoir, Stanislaus Joyce, under the exasperation of this thorn in his flesh, became himself a writer, and the author of this book which is worthy to occupy a permanent place on the bookshelf beside the works of his brother."

Professor Richard Ellmann has annotated the manuscript, which was left incomplete at the author's death in 1955, and has written an introductory account of Stanislaus' life. Stanislaus was three years younger than James, but he worshipped him and tried to follow in his footsteps. When James left Ireland for Trieste in 1904, for example, Stanislaus followed a year



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later, and for awhile they both taught in the Berlitz school. Except for a few years of internship in Austria during World War I, Stanislaus remained in Trieste until his death fifty years later. Unlike his brother, who broke his self-imposed exile and returned to Ireland on two occasions, Stanislaus never came back. It may be just as well—if the bitterness of this strange book is an indication of what its author felt he owed to the country of his birth.

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# Interpretation

THE SUNDIAL. By Shirley Jackson. Farrar, Straus. $3.75.

By JEAN HOLZHAUER

SHIRLEY JACKSON, one of our more versatile women writers, has followed two humorous books about domesticity (*Life Among the Savages; Raising Demons)* with a novel. Furthermore, it is a novel carrying an aftertaste of the horror story that made her first major success, "The Lottery."

*The Sundial* is ostensibly the chronicle of a family, the Halloran, and an assortment of friends and hangers-on trapped with them in a country estate during the months of their apocalypse.

The Halloran house and grounds, sumptuous and symmetrical, are the work of a man who came into money and could think of nothing else to do with it. Furnished with every luxury, surrounded by formal gardens, including a maze, the whole is walled around to enclose its treasures but equally to hold out the world of others. Its single asymmetry is the sundial, off-center on the sweep of lawn, inscribed by a mistake of its designers not with a conventional motto about time, but with *"What is this world?"*

The builder is now dead. The mistress of the house is his daughter-in-law, Orianna Halloran, an elderly apparent gentlewoman. But his daughter, Aunt Frances Halloran, remembers that Orianna's origins were low. His son Richard, Orianna's husband, is a feeble old man in a wheelchair, occasionally brought out of his room for appearance's sake. The story begins after the funeral of Lionel, whom, it is rumored, Orianna pushed downstairs to his death to insure her control of the house.

Lionel's widow, Maryjane, and his daughter Fancy, eight, also live in the house. So do Essex, a sycophantic young man brought in to catalogue the library, and Miss Ogilvie, Fancy's governess.

Added to these in the course of the story are Mrs. Willow, a lusty former schoolmate of Orianna's; the two Willow daughters, Julia and Arabella, characterized respectively by brains and beauty; a mysterious fellow known simply as the Captain, and a young girl named Gloria.

To Aunt Fanny, known to be eccentric in her aristocracy, comes a prophetic vision of her dead father in the garden. The father advises her that the world is soon to end and that those in the house alone will survive to begin new life in Elysia.

It is subtly characteristic of their relationships that the others accept literally both Aunt Fanny's madness and her revelations, which are repeated. The girl Gloria is made to look into a drawing room mirror by candlelight; what she sees corroberates the prophecy. The household sets purposively to prepare for its survival.

United in their preparations under Mrs. Holloran's self-appointed leadership (they complain that her rules will prevent fun in Paradise), each character remains unchanged. In their dual roles of ordained elect and concupiscent humans, they spin out the story.

Outraged by the seeming madness, Julia and the Captain try to escape. Mrs. Halloran diverts the Captain by a trick with money and sends Julia off alone with a hired driver. Scarcely out of sight of the house, Julia is confounded by worse irrationality. In terror and dense fog she stumbles back, leaning on the great wall, and rejoins the party.

A *fete* is held for the villagers as a farewell to the known world. Mrs. Halloran presides in a gold dress, a gold crown. Present are the Misses Inverness, poor shopkeepers. A Aunt Fanny scorns Mrs. Halloran Mrs. Halloran scorns the Inverness sisters. She interrupts their polite greetings.

"Do you like my crown?" Mrs Halloran asks, directly.

"A crown?" said Miss Inverness "I confess I had not thought of i as a crown, Mrs. Halloran. I looked to me like a substitute for hat."

"It is a crown," Mrs. Halloran said complacently.

"Well, I'm sure it is very becoming. Although, of course, for general wear. . . ."

"I certainly intend to wear it generally," Mrs. Halloran said.

"Perhaps not suitable for everybody. But very handsome, nevertheless. An heirloom?" Miss Inverness was puzzled for compliments.

"It will be."

"Yes. You carry it well, Mrs. Halloran. My sister and I were brought up to believe in nobility of character and to disdain baubles of rank. But we would certainly not impose our opinions upon others."

Mrs. Halloran laughed. "Had you ever thought of wearing a crown, Miss Inverness?"

Miss Inverness stiffened. "In Paradise . . . a princely diadem . . ." she said. "Although my father was an agnostic."

"*My* father," said Aunt Fanny, "was a splendid man. I recall that he mentioned your father, Miss Inverness, most affectionately."

In this passage, as in most of the book, the intimation of allegory is too strong to ignore. Many interpretations are possible; one, a little more than possible, is the equation of the Halloran realm, with its wealth, enclosure, certainty of superiority and survival, revelation in one branch of the family and organization in the other (with the two branches genteely at war), sycophants, rebellious rational minds—and the Catholic Church. In this reading, Mrs. Halloran becomes a Mother Church figure; the warm marble statues in the garden remnants of paganism; Aunt Fanny in her precedence as a Halloran and her bare tolerance of Orianna, the Old Testament



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prophets; Mrs. Halloran's ghostly father-in-law, the voice of God; her more or less invisible, always manipulable husband, that Spouse of Whom Mrs. Halloran is the bride.

Mrs. Willow becomes something like Secularism, limited and crassly envying the Halloran resources; her daughter Julia, pure reason, unlike the Halloran empire weak and vulnerable to confusion. And surely the despised Miss Inverness, daughter of the agnostic whom God mentioned with affection, becomes the Protestant sects.

Some such interpretation, right or wrong, gives point to an otherwise rather blunt satire, and lends to several scenes irresistible comedy. Even with this key, the book is uneven. Aunt Fanny's orgies of revelation ring hollow; better is her discovery of the vestiges of her womanhood in the garden maze planned on the letters of her mother's name. Much of the drawing-room dialogue is tedious; better is the belated remembrance, by several members of the garden party, of Mrs. Halloran's neglected husband alone indoors. Drunk on champagne at the same party, three villagers reminisce over their memories of the first Mr. Halloran, long dead.

"He was a fine man," said Mr. Armstrong, tiredly.

"A fine man," Mr. Peabody agreed.

"Oh yes," said Mr. Atkins. "A very fine man."

It is superfluous to point out that, under the suggested interpretation, the novel also becomes an anti-Catholic one. In its subtlety and its specialization, however, it seems unlikely to be very dangerous, and its satire is too general to be taken as an attack solely on the Church. It would be a great pity to get our backs up and respond to *The Sundial* with what has become, alas, our usual hullabaloo. With wealth, enclosure, certainty of our tradition and survival, and with both mystics and good organizers in the family, we ought not to waste our time and others' patience with defensive outcries.

But if other Catholic reviewers see in *The Sundial* what I see, no doubt we will, we will.

# Ambitious Attempt

A PLACE WITHOUT TWILIGHT. By Peter Feibleman. World. $4.75.

By ROBERT GUTWILLIG

SPRING is here! The fountain in front of the Plaza is spurting and splashing, old men are sporting sandwich boards directing us to little rooms where the income tax puzzle may be solved for $5, $3, or even $2, and some sixty or seventy first novels are blossoming forth in all shapes, sizes, colors, and aromas. Peter Feibleman's *A Place Without Twilight* is certain to be one of the most arresting, if not one of the most successful, first novels of this season. It is a failure, but an ambitious failure.

Mr. Feibleman has chosen to tell the story of Lucille Morris, a light-skinned Negro girl, who enters asking at the age of ten with a father, mother and two brothers and exits almost four hundred closely-printed pages later at twenty-three without any family or answers at all. The place is New Orleans; the time the thirties and forties. Cille is the narrator; it is through her eyes that the action is experienced, reported and interpreted.


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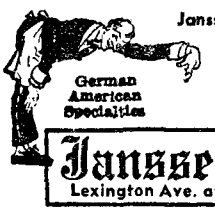

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The author has attempted a considerable imaginative feat, and one is not so much surprised that Cille talks badly but that she talks at all. Young writers are forever accused of writing too directly of their experience and being too close to their subject. Perhaps the opposite is true in Mr. Feibleman's case, for so many of his scenes are not sharply visualized, but rather cluttered with irrelevant and repetitious details and rambling commentary. He is not content to render his theme dramatically and economically, but too often reverts to brooding, overblown descriptive passages, flat statements ("Our father was a different kind of person. He was real —loving real. He was something of a real man."), or bewildering observations ("And dead laughter is deader than a baby's tears.").

Although there is an over-abundance of incident, the novel is actually plotless. Characters die, go mad, wash laundry, fall in love, become servants, eat, drink, laugh, cry, in fact do everything but really come alive on the page. But there is no apparent direction or meaning to all this. Perhaps this is Mr. Feibleman's point—that life itself is directionless and meaningless and it is only what one imposes upon life that lends it a purpose. Perhaps.

Cille, as the central character and spokesman, should bring the book's various disparate elements together. Unfortunately, she simply does not, for the quality of her narrative is neither spontaneous nor particularly compelling, but rather a curious mixture of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Thomas Wolfe. It is an unsettling combination, and the novel's most regrettable failing.

When all of these unpleasant things have been said, they are still not enough to vitiate entirely Mr. Feibleman's intentions or achievements. He is a writer; there is no doubt of that. When he is able to contain himself, his prose has both grace and accuracy, his characters momentarily burst through all the rhetoric and are vital and winning. When Mr. Feibleman tries very hard to be funny, his humor has all the subtlety and surprise of a minstrel show. When he does not try so hard, the humor growing out of small, rather ordinary situations is very charming indeed. When he insists too loudly and too long that this is a "hurting world," that growing up is painful, and that being a light-skinned Negro is agonizing, then he is a bore. But when he shows us the world and peoples it for us, he can be both persuasive and moving. Mr. Feibleman's next novel should be better.


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## Exciting Critic

GNOMON. By Hugh Kenner. McDowell-Obolensky. $4.50.

By DANIEL J. CALLAHAN

THE professional literary critic, astutely aware that his trade is the product of any number of conflicting traditions and equally aware that his art has received formal sanction only within the academy, has been forced to adopt postures, stances, and stratagems; in short, he must justify his existence. If the critic is simply "competent" he may give us valuable insights into a work of art; but if he is something more than that he inevitably takes on the risk of being more attractive than the text he talks about. His art ceases to be parasitic. It competes with its subject. And, needless to say, a critic is consistently triumphant if the work he talks about becomes more or less irrelevant to what he himself has to say. Hugh Kenner, who has brought together in *Gnomon* a selection of his essays, tends to be, I suspect, a critic of the latter sort.

This is not to say that the writers Mr. Kenner has selected to elucidate in this collection possess no stature apart from the vagaries of literary taste; those who particularly interest him—Yeats, William Carlos Williams, Pound, Wilkie Collins, Marianne Moore, and Wyndham Lewis —do not, for the most part, need apologists. Nevertheless, as our author makes clear, the precise merits of their writing are frequently not as clear as some critics seem to think. Even less clear are the ultimate aims of criticism itself, especially when poetry is at stake.

Kenner's strength, procrustean in every way, lies not only in his exegetical talents but even more in his ability to make the neglected or forgotten take on contemporary significance. He accomplishes this in an indirect way by forcing us to reflect upon what he sees to be the logical implication of criticism: when he says that the function of criticism is " 'the elucidation of works of art' and derives from this a theory about 'the correction of taste,' " he commits, like Pope, Dennis, and others, something akin to what Hume called the fallacy of deriving an "ought" from an "is." And yet the immediate difficulty with this purported fallacy is that, in the end, we have nothing upon which to base our normative judgments except "what is." This is certainly true of the critic's job which is dependent upon the "given" that is the work of art in front of him. Judgment, Kenner implies, can only mislead if it is the fruit of a priori norms.



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For this reason Kenner's criticism is particularly convincing when he dissects the fads and heroes of contemporary criticism: the recourse to arid methodology of the "New Criticism," text-book anthologies, the pomposity of a Blackmur, or the Cartesianism of an Empson.

It is not Kenner's way to set out for our inspection his own critical standards and axioms. That sort of artificial activity seems to him pretentious. If, as he says, "value judgments" are traditional with critics, he would rather let his appear by making them implicit in his choice of subjects and in "the comparisons implicit in any discussion of a particular work's or writer's nature."

His choice of authors bears this out: they are, in general, either "established" or slightly less than established, and his strategy is not to defend them but to reveal their neglected virtues. Often enough he appears to accept the censure that these authors' art at first elicited; but the publication of such works as *Paterson, Rock Drill,* and *The Human Age* draws attention to the fact that for the first time since the death of Pope the procedures of literary creation are again in such adjustment as to permit the best writers of a time to do their best works in the later years of a long life."

Kenner gives us good reason to correct our tastes concerning these writers; for a more general "correction" one must look to his other works. Kenner is an exciting writer and if, as he says of Blackmur, his "linguistic playfulness has run wild" from time to time, his essays at least embody judgments free of the smothering prose of educationist criticism.

**REVIEWERS**

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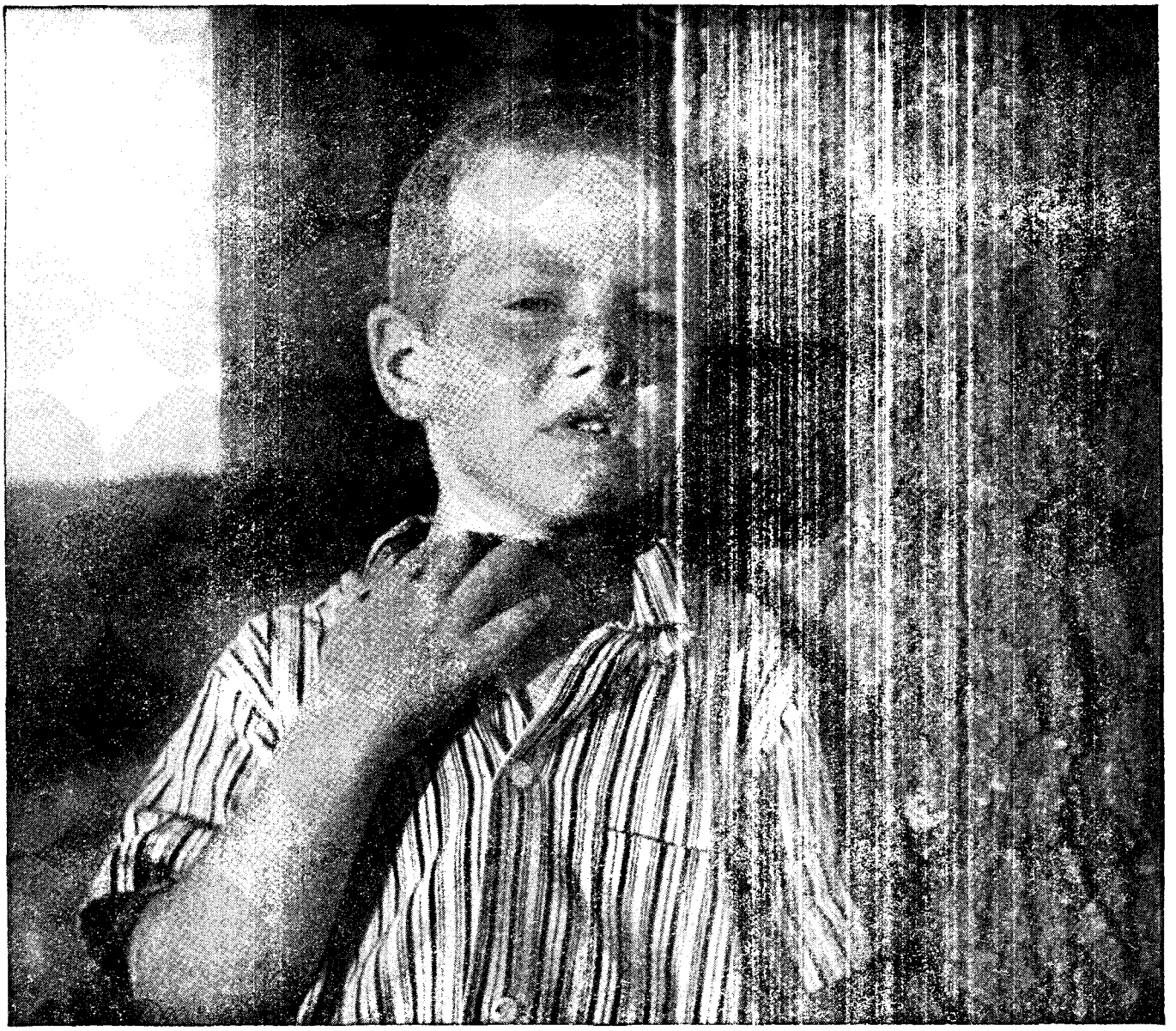

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